

My name is J. C. Bass and I live at 16205 Hwy. 98 N., Okeechobee, Fla. 34972.

I am a life long beef cattle rancher and I am continuing in the cow/calf production Area of the industry. I have served on Florida Farm Bureau's Livestock Committee As Chairman as well as two years as Chairman of the American Farm Bureau's Livestock Committee and seven years representing Florida on the National Beef Research And Promotion Board.

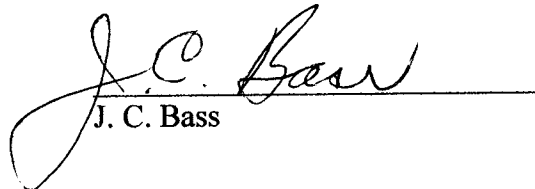
I have heard beef labeling discussed for years and I know that it was recommended in Florida several years ago, however, it appeared to have been dropped in the legislative process from the States' labeling law which covered vegetables and fruit.

Labeling was recommended and now is the law mandated by Congress for the USDA To implement. I beg you to keep it simple for the cow/calf producer. All animals not identified as foreign should be considered domestic or born in this country. You have a way of identifying and tracing foreign cattle by brand or tattoo. Foreign potential slaughter cattle could be worked through the chain for a period of time and monitored for abuses after a certain date.

USDA has the opportunity to make labeling work for all segments of society. Our consumers need to know the source of their food products. Thanks to R-Calf and the Consumer Federation of America along with many others who joined in an effort to support this action through the Farm Bill. I, for one, don't want to see it scuttled at the last minute.

COOL can be more than just a big aggravation if the different segments of our industry give it a chance and pull together for consumer satisfaction. Identification will be demanded more and more in the future. Let us take advantage of this opportunity to make it work for all of our customers as well as producers in the chain.

Thank you.


J. C. Bass